

**Hartford Mayor's Cabinet for Young Children
Policies and Guidelines
Mayor's Cabinet for Young Children Membership, Responsibilities, and
the Role of the Liaison
C-01**

In 2005, Hartford released the state's first Blueprint for Young Children, a five-year plan to unite diverse programs and services throughout the City and meld them into a cohesive coordinated, family-centered system that focuses public policymaking and financial investment to improve the lives of young children and their families. One of the six Blueprint action steps called for the establishment of a Mayor's Cabinet. Created in 2006, in cooperation with the school system, the Cabinet advises the Mayor and Superintendent in setting policy on all matters affecting young children with the Department of Families, Children, Youth and Recreation's Division for Young Children, coordinating and implementing policy.

In order to satisfy the School Readiness Statute under Connecticut General Statutes section 10-16r (a), a local School Readiness Council (SRC) convened and appointed by the chief elected official and the Superintendent of schools must be developed and include representatives from the following:

- Chief elected official or designee
- Superintendent of schools or designee
- Hartford parents
- Representatives from local Hartford programs such as Head Start, Family Resource Centers, non-profit and for-profit child day care centers, group day care homes, prekindergarten and nursery schools, and family day care home providers
- Hartford health care provider
- Others who provide services to Hartford children

Mayor Luke Bronin, in accordance with Hartford's Early Childhood Initiative co-chairs the Mayor's Cabinet for Young Children, which fulfills the requirements of a School Readiness Council, but broadens its scope to incorporate all of the City's early childhood services for children ages birth to age nine and their families. As such, the Mayor's Cabinet and its Department of Families, Children, Youth and Recreation's Division for Young Children:

- Make recommendations to the Mayor and the superintendent of schools on issues relating to all Hartford early childhood initiatives, including any applications for grants;
- Foster partnerships among early childhood providers;
- Assist in the identification of (A) the need for preschool and infant/toddler programs and the number of children not being served by such programs, and (B) the number of children not being served and the estimated cost of providing universal access to Hartford children;
- Submit biannual reports to the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood on the number and location of preschool and infant/toddler spaces, estimates of future needs, and the factors identified pursuant to this subsection;
- Cooperate with the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood in any program evaluation and use developed measures for evaluating the effectiveness of early childhood programs;
- Identify existing and prospective resources and services available to young children and families;
- Facilitate the coordination of the delivery of services to children and families, including referral procedures and before- and after-school care for school-aged children;
- Exchange information with other municipalities and Hartford organizations serving children and families;
- Make recommendations to school officials concerning the transition from preschool to kindergarten and the alignment of instructional practices and standards from birth through 3rd Grade, and
- Encourage public participation.

Mayor's Cabinet Structure:

1. The Mayor and the Superintendent, or designee, are members of the Cabinet. The Mayor designates the Chair or Co-chairs.
2. The Mayor convenes the Cabinet and leads the work in collaboration with the Superintendent.

To avoid Cabinet administrative conflict of interest regarding the School Readiness Program, the CT Office of Early Childhood recommends co-chairs instead on one chair (Mayor and Superintendent or their designees) as well as the following guidelines:

- Program Directors that receive School Readiness funds, School Readiness Liaisons, or direct supervisors of Liaisons are not eligible to be Chairs or Co-Chairs of the Cabinet.

- Program Directors that receive School Readiness funds, School Readiness Liaisons, or direct Supervisors of Liaisons may not be designees on behalf of the Mayor or Superintendent.
- When the Mayor or Superintendent and their designees all attend Cabinet meetings, the Mayor and the Superintendent vote with the Cabinet, the designees do not have a vote. When designees represent the Mayor or Superintendent, the designees vote on their behalf.

3. Cabinet By-Laws and Decision-making:

The Mayor's Cabinet has written by-laws that are updated when necessary that describe decision-making processes utilizing State policies as a foundation. The By-laws do not favor one sector (public school, community provider) over another.

Recommendations for funding and all Cabinet work shall not be overruled by the Chief Elected Official or Superintendent or any other governing body at the local level. The Cabinet is a collaborative network charged with planning to serve all 3- and 4-year old children in high quality programs. The intent is:

- To engage in shared and informed decision-making; for example, informed by the cross-sector membership of the Cabinet. Since the involvement of the Mayor and Superintendent offices is required, all matters and decisions are discussed and voted upon openly at Cabinet meetings.
- School Readiness Liaisons do not vote on Cabinet matters.
- Early childhood providers or those receiving funds from the Cabinet do not vote on distribution of funds.
- The fiduciary, City of Hartford, assists the Cabinet with fiscal responsibilities associated with the administration of grants and contracts. The Hartford City Council does not hold decision-making authority regarding the administration, coordination, or evaluation of the School Readiness grant, inclusive of funding decisions.

4. The Role of the Cabinet School Readiness Liaison:

The Liaison, the Assistant Director of the Department of Families, Children, Youth and Recreation overseeing the City's Division for Young Children, is responsible for the coordination, program evaluation and administration of the School Readiness Grant and serves as liaison between the Cabinet and the CT Office of Early

Childhood. One of the primary responsibilities is to recruit eligible programs for potential funding (see appendix: Role of Liaison).

The Liaison is specifically charged with the administration, coordination, and evaluation of the School Readiness grant in collaboration with the Ct Office of Early Childhood. It is the responsibility of the Cabinet and Liaison to share information with their sub-grantees and ensure each program is in compliance with the nonsectarian guidelines in order for sub-grantees to receive funding as a school readiness program.

General Policy 14-10 Appendix
Roles and Responsibilities in the Administration, Coordination and Evaluation of the School Readiness Program

The DFYC Assistant Director assumes the responsibility for the coordination, program evaluation and administration of Hartford's School Readiness Program. In addition, the Assistant Director acts as the liaison between the Mayor's Cabinet for Young Children and the CT Office of Early Childhood. The Assistant Director shall maintain ongoing communication between the CT Office of Early Childhood, the Mayor's Cabinet for Young Children, the Mayor, the Superintendent and the sub-grantees. Additional school readiness responsibilities include:

- Staff the Mayor's Cabinet for Young Children and ensure meeting minutes are provided, create meeting agenda, complete reports, maintain Cabinet membership, communicate legislative requirements, provide resources and updates to policy and procedure developments.
- Oversee the School Readiness and Quality Enhancement grant application processes using the CT Office of Early Childhood template and follow local bidding processes.
- Provide outreach to the Hartford community to assist families in the enrollment process for School Readiness and other early care opportunities.
- Meet regularly with providers to provide a forum to share information and best practices; review and clarify policies and regulations; disseminate information; assess needs and set priorities; problem solve; share resources; develop collaborative initiatives; and provide technical assistance on policies and practices related to the School Readiness quality components or seek those with expertise that can provide such assistance.

- Conduct regular site visits* to monitor compliance with all of the School Readiness grant regulations and develop action plans when appropriate. The areas to be regularly monitored include fiscal and policy compliance related to:
 - Staff qualifications
 - Attendance
 - Parent fees
 - Curriculum and assessment
 - Accreditation and approval timelines
 - Licensing
 - Professional development
 - Program adherence to all School Readiness Components: health, family literacy, nutrition, etc.
- Collaborate with local school systems and early care and education programs to develop and implement the local transition to kindergarten plan as well as a PreK to Grade 3 Educational Alignment.
- Maintain, manage and archive records.
- Attend scheduled liaison meetings to exchange information with the CT Office of Early Childhood and respond state requests for information.
- Support the development and ongoing implementation of Hartford's early childhood plan.
- Represent the Mayor's Cabinet for Young Children in the community and across the state.

*The School Readiness Liaison is ultimately responsible for monitoring the individual sub-grantees but the actual monitoring of Hartford School Readiness sub-grantees is performed by the DFYC Early Childhood Monitors who have extensive early childhood expertise and experience.